



**A BOOK REVIEW OF MALCOLM GLADWELL'S DAVID AND GOLIATH:  
UNDERDOGS, MISFITS, AND THE ART OF BATTLING GIANT**

**A Final Project**

In Paticular Fulfillment of the Requirement

For S-1 degree in Linguistics

In English Department, Faculty of Humanities

Diponegoro University

Submitted by:

Athalia Damaria Ariawati

13020111140140

**FACULTY OF HUMANITIES**

**DIPONEGORO UNIVERSITY**

**2018**

## **PRONOUNCEMENT**

I state truthfully that this project is compiled by me without taking the result from other research in any university, in S-1, S-2, and S-3 degree and in diploma. In addition, I ascertain that I do not take the material from other publications or someone's work except for the references mentioned in bibliography.

Semarang, 27 March 2018

Athalia Damaria Ariawati

## **MOTTO AND DEDICATION**

*Then you will experience God's peace, which exceed anything we can understand.*

**Philipians 4:7a**

**This final project is dedicated to  
my family and my future life ahead**

**A BOOK REVIEW OF MALCOLM GLADWELL'S DAVID AND GOLIATH:  
UNDERDOGS, MISFITS, AND THE ART OF BATTLING GIANT**

**Written by:**

**Athalia Damarisa A**

**NIM: 13020111140124**

is approved by project advisor,  
on March 29<sup>th</sup>, 2018

Project Advisor,

Rifka Pratama, S.Hum., M.A

NIP. 19900428 011511 1 092

The Head of the English Department,

Dr. Agus Subiyanto, M.A.

NIP. 19640814 199001 1 001

## **VALIDATION**

Approved by  
Strata I Final Project Examination Committee  
Faculty of Humanities Diponegoro University  
On August 2018

Chair Person

Arido Laksono S.S., M.Hum.  
NIP. 197507111999031002

First Member

Ariya Jati, S.S., M.A.  
NIP. 197802282005021001

Second Member

Prof. Dr. Nurdien H. Kistanto, M.A  
NIP. 195211031980121001

Third Member

Drs. Catur Kepirianto, M.Hum  
NIP. 196509221992031002

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Praise to Jesus Christ who has given strength and spirit, so this final project entitled “A Book Review of David and Goliath: Underdogs, Misfits, and The Art of Battling Giant By Malcolm Gladwell’s” came to a completion.

On this occasion, the writer would like to thank all of those people who have contributed to the completion of this final project.

The deepest gratitude and appreciation are extended to Rifka Pratama, S.Hum., M.A., who has given his continuous guidance, moral support, helpful correction, advice, and suggestion in completion of this final project.

The writer’s deepest thank also goes to the following:

1. Dr. Redyanto Noor, M.Hum., as the Dean of Faculty of Humanities Diponegoro University.
2. Dr. Agus Subyanto, M.A., as the Head of English Department, Faculty of Humanities Diponegoro University.
3. Retno Wulandari, S.S., M.A., as the writer’s academic advisor.
4. All of the lecturers in English Department, Faculty of Humanities Diponegoro University.
5. The writer’s beloved parents, sister, and big family for convincing that the writer could do her best going through everything.
6. The writer’s college classmates batch 2011, especially class E and American Studies class.
7. The writer’s friends in organizations, EDSA UNDIP, Trax FM, and Atlas Room.
8. Brikarisa, Yudha, Yogi, Rycho, Putra, Bagas, Agra, Faizal, Ius, Singgih, eventhough distance tears us appart, you’ll always be the writer’s body and soul.

The writer realizes that this final project is far from perfection. Therefore, she will be glad to receive any constructive criticism and recommendations to make this final project better.

Finally, the writer expects that this final project will be useful to the reader who wishes to learn something about extended self in possessing something.

Semarang, 27 March 2018

Athalia Damaria Ariawati

## INTRODUCTION

### 1. Background of the Writing

*David and Goliath* is a famous classic story that has been told and retold for more than 3000 years in various form of delivery such as movies, books, or theatrical adaptation. Still, the story has a huge resonance to its audience until today. This is generally how the story is being told: an underdog (David) with unusual courage, dares to confront a giant warrior (Goliath) and the victory goes to the underdog. Supposedly, it is not uncommon that the story will come out with such a bore to its audience; bear in mind the story has been circling for years. But to the author, the problem with that version of the events is that almost everything about it is wrong (Gladwell, 2013).

David and Goliath: Underdogs, Misfits, and the Art of Battling Giants by Malcolm Gladwell excels to reach an international bestseller book and has been an assigned reading for business-school courses. With author's fascination and analysis on biblical tale of David and Goliath, his book managed to lead us to a new way in perceiving weakness and strengths, which exist in this world. Bringing out nine relatable modern stories that incorporate the tale's values, the *New Yorker* writer raises our consciousness and lessons that we have already known, yet often forgotten. This only increases an interest to dig deeper in this book since our perception and discouragement and this is where we might have misunderstood or misinterpret. As Malcolm Gladwell said on his first chapter of the book, page 10, titled Goliath: 'Am I A Dog That You Should Come to Me with Sticks?' "Giants are not what we think they are".

The writer's fascination of the book lies upon the value of how a man's story might change a process of thoughts or point of view. Stories within the book carry an unusual



beauty of human struggles, spirit and dreams. Facing a strange odd can really put hard times in life. But with this book, the writer can learn to cope with disadvantages within ourselves. Little, Brown and Company and Penguin Group USA are among other publishers which published the book for public consumption. For this review, the writer reviewing the book published by Penguin Group USA. The book consists of 305 pages, with paperback covers, purchased at Rp. 129.820,00 rupiah.

## **2. Purpose of the Writing**

With that background being addressed, the writer determined to review Malcolm Gladwell's *David and Goliath: Underdogs, Misfits, and the Art of Battling Giants* to highlight many important values within the book. Writer's review will focus on two particular subject matters, which are first, the notion of "the Advantages of Disadvantages (and the Disadvantages of Advantages)"; and second will focus on the strength and the weakness of the book. The writer will discuss the author's delivery on how readers often fail to understand weakness or perceive strength in this life; reflecting on the story of Vivek Renadivé, Tresa DeBritto and Caroline Sacks. This section will reveal how context usually supersedes character(s), showing that disadvantage contributes as a vital part to a character's development.

Furthermore, the writer will peel off the strength and weakness according to the writer's point of view and experience in exploring the book as well. In here, the writer will work to present the primacy of the story that have been read in the sense of author's writing style and tone; the power of author's story telling and author's detailed research in the reflective stories. On the other hand, along in this section the writer will also present the weakness of the book in the sense of physical form and electronic version of the book. The

writer is keen to give a comprehensive review of the book in order to give readers or future readers some insights of this tremendous book. The writer believes in the importance of the book to be read by anyone, to see the beauty being produced by facing a great odd as depicted on *David and Goliath: Underdogs, Misfits, and the Art of Battling Giants*.

### **3. Author's Biography**

Malcolm Gladwell, *The New Yorker* writer has published many renowned books, mentioning *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Make a Big Difference* (2000), *Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking* (2005), *Outliers: The Story of Success* (2008), and *What the Dog Saw: And Other Adventures* (2009). All of these books appeared on *The New York Times* bestsellers list. His works mainly deals with research in the field of psychology, social psychology and sociology. Born on September the 3<sup>rd</sup> 1963, he is not only working as a writer or journalist, but also an influential speaker, being a host on *Revisionist History* podcast and *TedTalks: Ideas Worth Spreading*. In addition to that, Gladwell has been acknowledged with prestigious honor that is American Sociological Association's first Award for Excellence in the Reporting of Social Issues in 2007. Malcolm Gladwell currently continues to write for *The New Yorker* and he also works as a contributing editor for sports journalism website, Grantland.

## SUMMARY OF THE BOOK

A place with breathtaking beauty, valleys covered in vineyards, wheat, sycamore trees and forests at the heart of Palestine, happened to be the birthplace to a most storied event that is the battle of *David and Goliath*. The Philistines from Crete are full of battle tested and dangerous warriors; they are the sworn enemy of the Israelites. On the mountain ridge near Bethlehem, both conflicting parties are already camped-up, prepared to devour one another till victory. Unfortunately, it only leaves them idle. Only looking across the ravine at each other. The Philistines had enough with the situation and sent their greatest, biggest, most vicious warrior down to the Israelites, and that giant shouts, “Choose you a man and let him come down to me! // If he prevails in battle against me and strike me down, / we shall be slaves to you. // But, if I prevail and strike him down, / you will be slaves to us and serve us.” (4) Hearing that roar, not a single Israelites warrior stood up, but one small shepherd boy. King Saul of the Israelites objected: “You cannot go against this Philistine to do battle with him, / for you are a lad and he is a man of war from his youth.” (5) The shepherd replied: “When the lion or the bear would come and carry off a sheep from the herd, / I would go after him and strike him down and rescue it from his clutches.” (5) Then there goes this small shepherd boy to the battlefield, he collects sticks and rocks and put it in his shoulder bag, and face the giant. His name is David.

The Philistines began to question why no one comes down to the battlefield. The Giant, known by the name of Goliath, expects a warrior of his match; fully armed, big

bodied, and with incredible fighting skills; instead he saw a small boy with sticks and stones. He insulted, “Am I a dog, that you should come to me with sticks?” without hesitation, David took one of his rock and put it on his sling shot and aimed at Goliath forehead. With a full force, the rock hits Goliath and he fell to the ground. David came up to him, seizes his sword and beheaded Goliath’s head. The battle is won miraculously by an underdog and this story has come to be embedded in our language as a metaphor for improbable victory.

Throughout the book, Gladwell analyses the event of *David and Goliath* from various perspective and deliver his analysis through numbers of factual events in the United States. Those events are all peeled in nine chapters within the book. Those are: 1) Vivek Ranadivé: “It was really random. I mean, my father had never played basketball before.” 2) Teresa DeBrito: “My largest class was twenty-nine kids. Oh, It was fun.” 3) Caroline Sacks: “If I’d gone to the University of Maryland, I’d still be in science.” 4) David Boies: “You wouldn’t wish dyslexia on your child. Or would you?” 5) Emile “Jay” Freireich: “How Jay did it, I don’t know.” 6) Wyatt Walker: “De rabbit is de slickest O’ all de animals de Lawd ever made.” 7) Rosemary Lawler: “I wasn’t born that way. This was forced upon me.” 8) Wilma Derksen: “We have all done something dreadful in our lives, or have felt the urge to.” 9) André Trocmé: “We feel obliged to tell you that there are among us a certain number of Jews”.

## REVIEW OF THE BOOK

During and after the writer read Malcolm Gladwell's *David and Goliath: Underdogs, Misfits and the Art of Battling Giants*, the writer thinks that this book has so many valuable lessons which people can apply in their day-to-day lives. The author manages to excite the readers' brain to think and re-think about various events and helps us to see the light around grievous misfortune or disadvantages experiences.

The writer commences this review chapter with the notion of '*Advantages of Disadvantages*' reflecting on the stories of Vivek Ranadivé, Teresa DeBrito and Caroline Sacks. Those are among the other stories that Gladwell presents in the book, and are the chosen stories that the writer seeks to dig deeper in this review. The chapter then followed by the writer's critics and highlights on some weakness of the book.

This book is about how we usually misunderstand greatness, power, and all other terms that depict advantages. He presents to the reader a story of a software firm employee from Silicon Valley, Vivek Ranadivé; who has the smallest idea how to lead or coach twelve 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grader girls, who are also lacks the experience of sport for a National Junior League Basketball Championship. He continues with a story of a Shepaug Valley middle school, where Mrs. Teresa DeBrito teaches, suffers from declining student number that affects class performance. He also informs the reader how depressing it can be to study among the smartest college students in one of the most prestigious university in United

States, and how it may affect interest of study or dreams when we are little, as what happened to Caroline Sacks; an organic chemistry student in Brown University.

**1. Vivek Ranadivé “It was really random, I mean, my father had never played basketball before.”**

Vivek Ranadivé is a software firm employee living in Menlo Park, the heart of Silicon Valley. He decided to coach a twelve-year-old girls basketball team for Junior League National Championship. His daughter, Anjali, is among other girls on the team who are also the daughters of software programmers. They call it “little blond girls”, daughters of nerds and computers programmer. Ranadivé coached the team based only on something that he knows. For him, there are two basic principles in coaching twelve-years-old girls. First, never shout at them. He must speak in a calm and soft tone possible. Second, is to play a *full-court press* strategy, which happens to be the most important part. This strategy plays a great role as the reason to this “little blonde girls” team victory.

Ranadvé himself never played basketball before. He grew up in Mumbai with the only sport that he accustomed to is soccer. He informed himself with basketball rules with help from a friend in his office, Roger Craig. *Full-court press* strategy is the only chance that these girls have. They are already having a hard time dribbling a heavy basketball ball and cannot shoot the ball besides easy lay-ups. With *full-court press*, they basically contested their opponents attempt to advance the ball up the court. This strategy is rarely applied in professional basketball matches, because it has its own weakness. Skilled basketball players can easily fight back with their own expertise in the game, such as long-range shoots (3-point shoot). But for Ranadivé’s team, this is the best that the girls can do; press the opponent, keeping them from getting close to their part of the court.

This brings back to David's case. If David came close to the Giant, Goliath can easily slash and smite him. But instead, David in his capacity weakened the Giant from afar. This is what the girls did as well. They did not come up to the opponents, which acquire all the advantage from matches' experiences with their excellent skills. In fact, they played seriously with what they are able to do, over and over again throughout the game.

Both David and Ranadivé victorious finals is not a product of miraculous event as we perceive for a moment. It is a product of hard work, creativity, and most importantly, *the advantage of disadvantages*. This example shows us that by overlooking advantage only make us focus on our disadvantage. We often let ourselves surrender to the greater power, discouraged by our own disadvantages. This then creeps up to our self-character development, unconsciously took disadvantages as something worthless in an instant. We are blind to take a second look on disadvantages and turns it into something that advantaging for us.

As the writer reads this story, the writer remembers her High School basketball championship. The writer's school team was a continuous winner and always at the top. Until one final match, the writer's school basketball team lost to the opponent that uses a *full-court press* strategy. The opponent team players are not as tallest as the writer's school team, and their shooting skills are nowhere close to the writer's school basketball team. But they full-pressed the court all the time so that the writer's school team cannot reach their court. Based on this personal experience, the writer thinks that: what Gladwell writes are not only scientific words, spreads out all over the book papers where the reader has to be a scientist to grasps the message. The writer thinks that everyone can actually relate to the author's ideas. Revisiting our idea on disadvantage or lack of ability can be the key to move forward. It teaches us not to be afraid, discouraged or reckless.

This book tweaks our understanding or perception on ‘disadvantages’. We are surrounded by heroic stories offered by medias, where the ‘hero’ is a big, tall, smart, handsome, strong, rich, here and there in perfect fashion. It develops our understanding that: besides those kinds of criteria is considered or recognized as disadvantage or ‘not good’. According to Richard Gregory *Top-down Processing in Knowledge in Perception and Illusion* (1997), refers to the use of contextual information in pattern recognition. For example, understanding foreign language, such as English is easier when we read or heard in whole sentence, rather than partly word-by-word (isolated words). This is because the meaning of the surrounding words provides a context to aid understanding.

Lately, heroic movies in theaters are lined up with the production from Marvel or DC Comics, where we all know that the main character is equipped fully with advantages. Those kinds of stories hit the highest ratings of viewers compared to a musical movie with underdogs character. If we look at the initial part of both stories, both have the same pursuance: victory; and both stories ended with victorious final. This means, generally people attracted to a victorious story, but with difference on: giant winner vs. underdog victory. People are more prone or in favor to a victorious stories played by a ‘certainly will win’ character because of their advantages given before hand, rather than an underdog whom has to fight and battle their own game side-by-side with their disadvantages. That kind of stories received a lower rating.

That notion brings back to our perception of advantages. We perceive that only advantages will lead to a victory, and disadvantages would not. Whereas such perception, build by our surroundings that continuously showering us with something like, “only the greatest will prevail”. Realistically, advantages are not the only factor.



## **2. Teresa DeBrito “My largest class was twenty-nine kids; oh it was fun.”**

Teresa DeBrito worried for her school that she teaches. The school name is Shepaug Valley Middle School; the school that at first, build to serve a baby boom in United States. Then, Connecticut is flooded with wealthy families from New York City, causing housing businesses develops rapidly, real estate agents grows larger and housing rent cost sky rocketed. This makes a lot of citizens from Connecticut moves to another place because housing rent was getting difficult to pay. It is then affecting number of student enrollment in Shepaug Valley Middle School, from 245 dropped to only 200. Total number of student in the class dropped from 23 to only 15. To our common sense, practically this is a good thing, because with smaller number of students in class, it increases focus in learning subjects and teacher can have more attention to each student individually. In fact, with fewer students in a class, discussion session suffers. There is not much of diversity in class that drives discussion activity more active. Hence, learning quality and experience drops as well.

Gladwell then continues the story about one of the most powerful person in Hollywood, where his childhood was full of struggles being born in an economically poor family. So economically challenged, that once his father had said to him (actual quote from the book) “Look, this is what we pay for electricity (showing electricity bill). You are just being lazy, not turning the lights off; we are paying you for being lazy. But if you need lights for working—twenty-for-hours a day—no problem.” Starting with a rough childhood, he stood up and refuses from being lazy. He starts from scraping metal; laundry business and now he became one of the richest men in Hollywood. He learnt the value of money by doing and placing wealth as a tool for his motivation to reach his dream. Swimming in wealth, our common sense tells us that he would struggle no more. But evidently, he faces dilemmatic stages to teach his children the value of life struggles and money. His children would not

have to fight to meet their demands, because in disguise or not, his children will always know that his father is swimming in wealth.

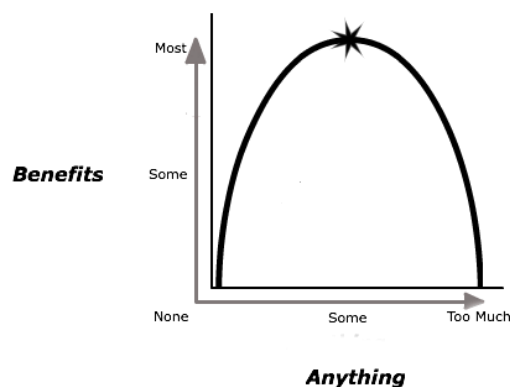
Those stories are one that compels me the most. It strikes my admiration and attention to three major parts. First, Gladwell utilization of day-to-day examples as a case study; second, Gladwell's stories analogy to deliver his ideas; and third, his academic research in analyzing the stories. The writer believes that the first two points of writer's admiration are self-explanatory. By having day-to-day examples makes the value of the story relatable and easy to understand. Gladwell's analogies to express his ideas are also quite easy to follow and make sense (logical). But the third one compels the writer the most.

Examining through his writing, readers will find number of footnotes, graphs and references to support his ideas. Looking on those references and footnotes, it is clear that Gladwell performs a deep research before hand. Collecting data, interviews with reliable respondents, and other components required in writing an academic paper. However, this is not an academic paper, journal nor research. Gladwell utilizes academic writing practices in his writings, yet managed to address it to all or general readers. It is not uncommon, even for university level intellectuals experiencing a hard time to understand academically published research, where supposedly the content is targeted to bring insightful ideas or information for every human in this world. The struggle is usually caused by the usage of complicated or scientific sentences, which are less practiced by people generally. I think that Gladwell is one of many writes that returns his intellectual or scholarly title available to all communities or at all level of readers in order to share what he had learnt from his studies and experience.

Base on DeBrito story, actually number of student problem is similar with money and parenting. What the writer think about perceive best is that the more money parents have, they can provide a better future for their children. Yet, as it turns out, this is not always the case. This is what the book called the inverted-U curve.

To the writer's understanding, the inverted-U curve translate to: if we have less of *something*, the benefit of it is also lessened; but if we have too much more of *something*, disadvantage of it also magnified. This is exactly what happens with Shepaug Middle School. They are having difficulties in larger number of student in class, such as more paper work (grading) for the teacher, the class is less focused on learning subjects, and teachers simply "need to have eyes" on the back of their head. But having so smaller size class did not help as well. Smaller class might sounds best for parents, because common sense said that with smaller number of student, the class will be more private and their children will have inclusive attention from the teacher. There are a lot of cases where parents are willingly pay huge amount of money on private schools for their children education, thinking that private schools is the best option for their children's future. But middle (junior high) school is one of the most important stages of children's development having the transition from being kids to adolescent. Children environment, including their social surroundings is one of the major factors that contribute to a person's character building. Thus, adult or parents decision in choosing the best school for their children is pivotal.

## **The Inverted U Curve**



Source: <https://scififantasyandbusinessreview.com/tag/inverted-u-curve/>

The writer thinks that this section is very prominent among others because the story really captures so many valuable lessons from a social phenomenon. First, we can learn that with a state of mind that presumes ‘bigger is better’ is not always true. There are many underlying factors that may shape ‘goodness’ or ‘bad’. Second, it captures advantage is not always plays as the support system to make self-improvement. In many cases, scarcity or lack of *something* (resources, energy, support, *etc...*) can be the sole factor to drive or motivate human spirit. Having a condition with scarcity of *something*, helps to make our target more focused and we are becoming braver to take risks. This is highly logical because if we are lacking of *something*, there are less of *something* that we might loose. Borrowing a movie dialogue from *Titanic* “When you got nothing, you got nothing to loose”. Third, having disadvantages enables us to be wiser, grateful of what we have and reduced the possibility of taking something for granted. Having disadvantages records clearly in our mind from our own personal experiences; and we understand deeply of our ‘hard times’. This understanding can play as a constant reminder of how we fight to reach our target, happiness or success. It is hard for that kind of understanding to be erased from our memory that contributes to human character to be more cooperative, raising human empathy and caring to one another.

### **3. Caroline Sacks “If I’d Gone to the University of Maryland, I’d still be in Science.”**

Among other story that Gladwell wrote in this book, the writer considered this story is remarkable, with the most relatable issue to many readers. As quoted from Pramoedya Ananta Toer in *Bumi Manusia*, “the story of joy is always unappealing. It is not a story about a man (people) and his life, rather about heaven, and certainly not occurring on our earth”, and this is it. This is a story about a person’s life. Her name is Caroline Sacks.

On the farthest fringes of the Washington, DC lives a very articulate girl who developed her huge fascination and interest on science in her young age. She likes to crawl on grass with her magnifying glass and sketchbook looking for bugs or insects for her to learn. Growing up, her dream is to be a scientist, veterinarian or ichthyologist. She took political science at nearby college while she was still in high school, as well as multivariant calculus course at the local community college. One day, her parents asked her to check out five (5) universities and they went to Wesleyan, Brown, Providence College, Boston College and Yale. Brown University, with its nineteenth-century neighborhood of redbrick Gregorian and Colonial Buildings won her heart. It is small, exclusive and probably the most beautiful university in United States. She set her heart at Brown but keeps Maryland as a second option for her studies. Caroline Sacks being a straight A’s student since junior high, got a letter that confirmed her acceptance at Brown. Her heart was filled with joy.

On her first day of college, she was surrounded by her fellow student that she presumes would be very rich, worldly and highly knowledgeable. Then she got there and she said, “everybody seemed to be just like me—intellectually curious and kind of nervous and excited and not sure whether they’d be able to make friends. It was very reassuring”. Her excitement on science puts her in a hard time when it comes to choosing subject of courses because everything sounds interesting to her. She ended up with Introductory Chemistry, Spanish, the Evolution of Language and Botanical Roots of Modern Medicine.

As the writer mentioned earlier, this is a story about a person's life. Let the following question sink on our mind for a moment: "do you think Caroline Sacks makes the right choice?" Learning from her background story, supposedly she is on the perfect place right now. As it turns out, she entered a world beyond her capacity to handle. Unfortunately she fails on her studies and the professor advised her to drop the class and retake it for the next semester. But she did not get any better anyway. Never before young Caroline Sacks received a rapport with a letter 'B' in it, let alone lower B. Her heart sank. She prepared so hard, studied tirelessly and she never got it down. On one night, when she stayed up late to prepare for her review session, she was angry and miserable. She did not want to work on organic chemistry at three a.m. and not getting any better at it. "I guess that was when I started thinking that maybe I shouldn't pursue this any further," she said. She had enough.

First time reading this story, the writer's thoughts, "she just cannot handle the pressure of her study. She still had a 'high school' study mindset rather than university level. She is just a happy, perfectionist girl that whine too much". However, as the writer reads the story further, it comes to the writer's realization that it is not about that. Emotional pressure, depression, exhaustion and frustration can really destroy our humble love. The sad thing is, Caroline Sacks loves science.

To analyze her story, many theories or concepts can be applied to get the bottom of it, such as *relative deprivation*; a term coined by sociologist Samuel Stouffer. Stouffer's point is that we form our impressions not globally, by placing ourselves in the broadest possible context, but locally—by comparing ourselves to people "in the same boat as ourselves." Our sense of how deprived we are is relative. Caroline Sacks compares her ability among her peers who are also the best student in United States. She was among the greatest minds or as Gladwell likes to put it "a small fish in a big pond". She would not stand out among that much excellence, which resulted to an understanding that she is not excellent. The thing is,

she is not excellent among the best. It does not mean she is not smart or an intelligent student compared to thousands of students who cannot even get accepted in one of the most prestigious university in United States. If we look it this way, Caroline Sacks is still on the tier list. But since the comparison is among her fellow students, no wonder she beats her own self down. Her classmates are very competitive; “They didn’t want to share their study habits with me. They didn’t want to talk about ways to better understand the stuff that we were learning, because that might give me a leg up.” Apparently, lots of people find organic chemistry is impossible. It is common for premed students to take organic chemistry over the summer at another college just to give themselves a full semester of practice. Furthermore, Sacks was taking organic chemistry at an extraordinarily competitive and academically rigorous university. If you were to rank all the students in the world who are taking organic chemistry, Sacks would probably be in the 99<sup>th</sup> percentile (Gladwell, 2013)

From this story alone, many important values can be learned and most of it concerning our perception, rationale and judgment. Starts from our perception of the best school to choose based on the university rankings, which overshadows other aspects to consider such as learning habits, offered courses, *etc.*; our rationale on the more or the biggest is equal to the better that may mislead our judgment on something like: only the best facility can lead to a better opportunity. On this subject matter, the writer likes to highlights how this sort of phenomena happens in our lives. Think back on how often we heard stories about our friends, siblings or colleague had to lose something that they loved because of misjudgment. As a student, it is not uncommon that I heard about my college friends who dropped out their studies because they feel like a failure in class; or a story about job application being turned down just because the applicant is not a graduate from reputable university, overlooking the applicants self ability.

On this opportunity, the writer also would like to highlight the notion of acceptance and rejection. The writer think that this story really brings out the point of “we live this live as we make it” and perhaps there is something wrong with it. Throughout our lives, we had been prepared or taught to make the right choices, or at least to prevent us from making the wrong ones. Starting from schools, where to eat, what to wear, where to work, *etc.* It is very logical that we chose something out of excitement, curiosity, infatuation or interest. Those few aspects help our thought process in assuring the final choice. Living those choices, whether the choice is our own or not, rejection is inevitable. From one rejection to another, with consciousness or unconsciously, we live our lives constantly looking for a place we fit in (acceptance). It would be such a bliss when we find our place among the society, but if we try and still fails, the feeling of being an ‘outsider’ might grow stronger. With that fact, we feel that there are no place in this world for us in the society and it becomes harder not to say or presumes that we are a failure, as how Caroline Sacks feels. We live in a system that acceptance, authorization, or affirmation drives our lives for something that we pursue. And at this stage, we are only left with two dilemmas: losing our love and interest to find acceptance from others (to be with our surroundings) or risking the reassuring feeling of acceptance from others and keep on making our dream to be real. Caroline Sacks chose to drop out science.

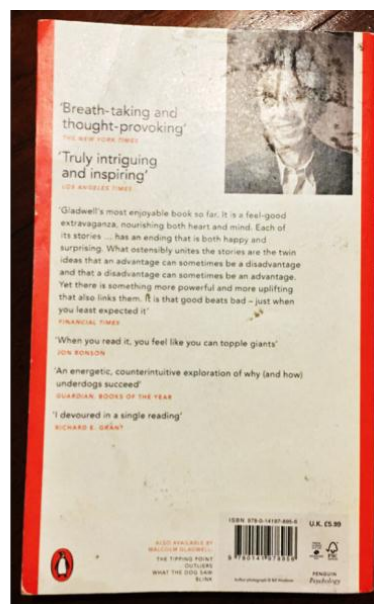
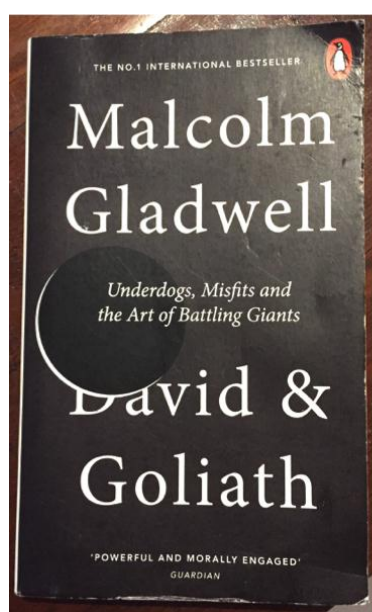
### **Strength and Weakness of The Book**

On this section, the writer will peel off the strength and weakness of the book that covers author’s writing style of the stories, reading experience, and printed book physic. Regarding the author’s writing style, the three key elements of rhythm, tone and flow is considered well delivered. Gladwell rarely overuse one sentence structure that distracts the



reader from the main idea, the story moves gracefully back and forth between the clarity of simple sentences and the richness of complex sentences with enough breathing parts for reader to pause. Nuances of emotion, irony and implication really sets a serious to a fair-minded tone that matched the materials presented on the book. Michael Flemming explained that when a story flow is written well, there is a steady progression of thought, with one idea leading inexorably to the next. The reader begins to suspend his natural tendency toward skepticism and distraction, and is drawn into the world of the writer that a story is "absorbing" or even "magical" when it flows well. Gladwell's *David and Goliath* really suit that category. He presented one main idea that is directly relevant to the main point of the story, he then support that idea with adequate evidence, details, illustrations and examples (some of them are stipulated within his footnotes). The writer reckons that as the strength of the book, in addition to authors main ideas to bring out the best out of misfortune, lack of capital or disadvantages discussed in the previous chapter.

Considering the weakness or critics of the book, the writer would like to start from the physical book condition. Penguin Group published the book with 11m by 18cm size, which makes the book rather small to handle and it affects the font size being rather light to read. Book paper type, which is quite rustic, really helps the grip on flipping the pages; but soft front and back paper covers makes the book easily damaged.



Front Cover

Back Cover

Furthermore, some critics of the book from the writer are on the implications of the story to readers and how some of the author's stories might ignite a temper or anger to readers. Based on the writer personal episodes in reading the book, the writer experienced a mixed feeling and thoughts. In some of his stories, Gladwell depicted disadvantages as something that could really bring victory or goodness in a man's live. However, there are a lot of instances where disadvantages or lacking on something would just be a misfortune in the real world. Without sufficient resources, may it be materials, knowledge, bravery, experience or even pressure; our goals would just be imaginary. This is the part that the writers cannot put that much high of appreciation to the story and ignites the writer critical thinking to the story. It is because the good spirit that Gladwell put on within the book may mislead our perception. Some ideas that he presents might really sounds like a false hope. However, the writer understands Gladwell's purpose or ideas and he succeed to highlight human's struggle and spirit that brings good intentions in this life.

## CONCLUSION

Who would have thought that disadvantages, shortcomings, or deficiency could be someone's core source of strength? David and Goliath: *Underdogs, Misfits, and the Art of Battling Giants* is the book that covers thoroughly on that idea. The writer considered this book, written by Malcolm Gladwell, is an excellent book to read and will recommend anyone to explore the book. Starting from a historic tale of David and Goliath, which generally taken as a magical tale, Gladwell spins our perception and understanding of disadvantage to turn it into an advantage. Through nine epic stories from people's experience, the author managed to put a scientific analyzes of the phenomena by reviewing back world history, social, political and cultural studies, as well as psychological approach into his book.

Selected stories from the book covers the notion of making advantage out of disadvantage (advantage of disadvantage) from the victory of "the little blond girls" daughters of nerds and computer programmers junior basketball league in Vivék Ranadive experience; learning that big is not always better or exclusiveness does not always equals to

“the best” from the story of Teresa DeBrito where her class suffers from having too many and too little number of students. At this chapter, readers are also presented with alternative paradigm upon perception of someone being economically rich must struggle no more, where in fact, having too much money complicates parents to teach their children the value of money, goods or life struggles. Furthermore, from Caroline Sacks story where she beats herself down for having difficulties and multiple failures in her studies resulting the fall of her life dreams, readers may learn that peer pressures can really affects a persons mental state health and people tendencies upon *relative deprivation* that compares themselves among their surroundings does not reflect the grand picture of the whole situation or phenomena. Thus, we should not rely too much on that kind of perspective, yet rather seek or build much positive energy to keep moving forward.

## REFERENCE

### Books:

Gladwell, Malcolm. *David and Goliath Underdogs, Misfits, and the Art of Battling Giants*.

The Penguin Group, 2013.

Levitt, Steven D., and Stephen J. Dubner. *Freakonomics*. Harper Collins Publishers. 2006

Bourdieu, Pierre, et al. *Distinction: a Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Routledge,

Taylor & Francis Group, 2015.

### Journal:

Gregory, Richard. "Knowledge in Perception and Illusion." Department of Psychology,  
University of Bristol, 8 Woodland Road, Bristol BS8 1TA UK, 1997.

Lim, Audrey Siew Kim, and Kam Ki Tang. "Human Capital Inequality And The Kuznets  
Curve." *The Developing Economies*, vol. 46, no. 1, 2008, doi:10.1111/j.1746-  
1049.2007.00054.x.

### **Others:**

"Malcolm Gladwell." 2012. FamousAuthors.org,  
[online] <<http://www.famousauthors.org/malcolm-gladwell>>

Wadman, Bill. "Book Review: 'David and Goliath: Underdogs, Misfits, and the Art of  
Battling Giants' by Malcolm Gladwell - The Boston Globe." *BostonGlobe.com*, 7 Oct.  
2013, [online] <[www.bostonglobe.com/arts/books/2013/10/06/book-review-david-and-goliath-underdogs-misfits-and-art-battling-giants-malcolm-gladwell/IJyxI3a3E59WxbEJJd6ZN/story.html](http://www.bostonglobe.com/arts/books/2013/10/06/book-review-david-and-goliath-underdogs-misfits-and-art-battling-giants-malcolm-gladwell/IJyxI3a3E59WxbEJJd6ZN/story.html)>

Critiques, Unique. "Inverted-U Curve on Unique Critiques." Unique Critiques,  
[scififantasyandbusinessreview.com/tag/inverted-u-curve/](http://scififantasyandbusinessreview.com/tag/inverted-u-curve/).

